

STATE OF MICHIGAN
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**Statement on Senate Bills 473-476 -
Priority Schools Legislation**

Mr. Warren moved, seconded by Mr. Austin, that the State Board of Education adopt the following statement regarding the Senate priority schools legislation:

Current State Board Efforts

The State Board of Education recognizes that some public school buildings and districts require dramatic improvement. The State Board has adopted as its current strategic goal “substantial and meaningful improvement in academic achievement in chronically underperforming schools.” Based on the testimony of nationally recognized experts, the State Board has established five task forces to develop policies around critical pathways of school improvement. Moreover, the Department of Education, under the direction of the State Board, is currently reforming the state school accreditation framework consistent with the goals of setting high standards, assessing performance along multiple measures, and possessing effective state intervention strategies to boost academic achievement of students attending unaccredited schools.

Priority Schools Legislation

By passing Senate Bills 473-476 (commonly referred to as the priority schools bills), the Senate made a laudable effort to identify schools failing to meet minimum thresholds of learning performance, using multiple measures to assess school success. The bills also provide a broader set of intervention strategies to boost academic achievement than currently available under state law. Accordingly, the Senate should be commended for its initiative to raise academic achievement in chronically underperforming schools. Unfortunately, the bills’ proposals to create a new system of accountability and a new School Improvement Board add unnecessary, redundant layers of bureaucracy that infringes our Constitution in connection with the leadership and general supervision of public schools. A better course would be to integrate the essential components of the proposed priority schools framework into the existing accreditation system.

Recommendations

The Legislature, State Board, and Department of Education should partner to develop a single, clear, and consistent performance and accountability framework for Michigan schools by improving the existing accreditation system to include: (1) the essential components of the proposed priority schools framework, (2) a single set of high performance standards and accountability measures, and (3) powerful and swift intervention strategies to support improving learning in unaccredited schools. In addition, the revised accreditation system should adhere to the Michigan Constitution by maintaining the leadership and general supervision of the accreditation system with the State Board and the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The motion carried unanimously.

Adopted August 23, 2001